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(54) [Title of the Invention] Projection-type liquid crystal display device

(57) [Abstract]

[PURPOSE] To provide a projection-type liquid crystal display device that projects a high-contrast-ratio image on a screen, easily displays gray scales, and reduces power consumption.

[CONSTITUTION] A projection-type liquid crystal display device provided with a transmission-type liquid crystal panel 21, a light source 22 that irradiates this liquid crystal panel 21 with light, and an optical system 23 which transmits the light emitted by the light source 22 through the liquid crystal panel 21, and projects this transmitted light onto a screen 24; further provided with a brightness-detecting circuit 12 that detects the mean brightness of the image signal over the entire screen, an image signal modulating circuit 15 that modulates the image signal voltage applied to the liquid crystal panel 21, in correspondence to the brightness signal detected by the circuit 12, and a light source brightness modulating circuit 13 that varies the brightness of the light source 22, in correspondence to the detected brightness signal.

- 11: Image signal input circuit
- 15: Image signal modulating circuit
- 12: Brightness-detecting circuit
- 13: Light source brightness modulating circuit
- 14: Power supply
- 10: Signal processor
- 20: Optical structure

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[Claims]

[Claim 1] A projection-type liquid crystal display device provided with a transmission-type liquid crystal panel, a light source that irradiates this liquid crystal panel with light, an optical system that transmits the light emitted by the light source through the aforementioned liquid crystal panel, and projects this transmitted light onto a screen, a means of supplying a drive voltage that matches an image signal to the aforementioned liquid crystal panel, and a means of varying the brightness of the light source in correspondence to the aforementioned image signal.

[Detailed Explanation of the Invention]

[0001]

[Industrial Field of Application] The present invention relates to a projection-type liquid crystal display device, and more particularly, to a projection-type liquid crystal panel display device provided with a means of varying the brightness of the light source.

[0002]

[Related Art] In recent years, thin and lightweight liquid crystal display devices have been garnering attention in PC monitors and small-size TV set applications. However, the liquid crystal TVs that have been commercialized so far are only around 4 inches diagonally, and both their size and price must be significantly improved before liquid crystal TVs can replace the current CRT-based TVs.

[0003] More recently, a projection-type liquid crystal display device has been developed that uses a liquid crystal panel as a light bulb, and combines it with a lens and a dichroic mirror to project an enlarged image onto a screen. This device is both smaller and lighter than the 3-tube projectors that use CRTs, and can achieve sufficiently large screen sizes.

[0004] FIGURE 8 illustrates a typical structure of a projection-type liquid crystal display device. This device is comprised of three liquid crystal panels 81, a light source 82 such as a halogen lamp, and an optical system 83 consisting of a lens and mirrors. The light emitted from the light source 82 is split by dichroic mirrors 83a into light beams of the red, blue, and green primary colors. After these light beams pass through the liquid crystal panel 81, they are combined by dichroic mirrors 83b and projected onto a screen 84, by a projection lens 83c. A signal voltage corresponding to each color is applied to each corresponding liquid crystal panel 81. Therefore, red, blue, and green images are magnified and projected onto the screen 84, displaying a color image.

[0005] However, this type of device has had the following problems: That is, when the screen size is increased, the brightness level on the screen decreases, resulting in lower contrast. If the brightness of the light source is increased to solve this problem, the power consumption and amount of heat generated both increase.

[0006] FIGURE 9 shows the voltage-brightness characteristics of the liquid crystal panel itself. Since the contrast ratio achievable in this case is as low as 50:1, the contrast ratio that is inherent in image signals cannot be displayed. Consequently, when a bright or dark area is displayed, the image becomes distorted, making it impossible to obtain high-resolution images. Furthermore, the voltage-brightness characteristic curve [of the liquid crystal panel] is too steep, and its voltage difference too small, to display detailed gray scales.

[0007] On the other hand, when a thin-film transistor (TFT) liquid crystal panel that is made of amorphous silicon (a-Si) is used as the liquid crystal panel, increasing the light intensity of the light

source, for the purpose of brightening the screen, ends up increasing the off current (optical leakage current) of the TFT, causing image degradation, such as a reduced contrast ratio.

[0008]

[Problems that the Invention is to Solve] As explained above, in conventional projection-type liquid crystal display devices, the liquid crystal panel characteristics result in an insufficient contrast ratio and, moreover, the voltage-brightness characteristic curve of the liquid crystal panel is too steep, making it difficult to display detailed gray scales. Furthermore, the light source's power consumption is large, and increasing the light source's light intensity increases the off current (optical leakage current), causing image degradation, such as a reduced contrast ratio.

[0009] The present invention has been devised in view of the aforementioned situation, and its objective is to provide a projection-type liquid crystal display device that projects a high-contrast-ratio image on a screen, displays gray scales with ease, and reduces power consumption.

[0010]

[Means of Solving the Problems] In order to solve the aforementioned problems, the present invention uses the constitution described below.

[0011] That is, the present invention provides a projection-type liquid crystal display device provided with a transmission-type liquid crystal panel, a light source that irradiates this liquid crystal panel with light, an optical system that transmits the light emitted by the light source through the liquid crystal panel and projects this transmitted light onto a screen, and a means of supplying a drive voltage that matches an image signal to the liquid crystal panel, wherein the brightness of the light source is varied in correspondence to image signals.

[0012] Here, the means of varying the brightness of the light source only needs to detect the mean, maximum, and minimum brightness levels of the image signal over the entire screen, and vary the brightness of the light source in correspondence to this detected information. In addition to the light source, it is also possible to modulate the drive voltage that is applied to the liquid crystal panel, in correspondence to the image signal.

[0013]

[Operation of the Invention] In the present invention, the brightness of the light source is varied, in correspondence to image signals. That is, when the image signal produces a generally dark image on the screen, the brightness of the light source is reduced. Conversely, when the image signal produces a generally bright image on the screen, the brightness of the light source is increased. This brings about an improvement in the contrast ratio, when bright and dark screens are compared. Additionally, lowering the brightness of the light source can reduce not only the power consumption, but also the light leakage from the active elements of the liquid crystal panel, improving the contrast ratio.

[0014] In addition, the drive voltage that is applied to the liquid crystal panel is varied, in correspondence to the image signal. That is, image signals are modulated in order to utilize the full range of the white and black levels, in the signal voltage-transmittance characteristics of the liquid crystal panel, and are used as the signal voltage to be applied to the liquid crystal panel. Then, since the signal voltage can be divided into fine gradations when displaying gray scales, gray scale display becomes easy, providing detailed gray scales.

[0015]

[Embodiments] The details of the present invention are explained below, referencing the illustrated embodiments.

[0016] FIGURE 1 is a schematic configuration diagram illustrating the projection-type liquid crystal display device related to a first embodiment of the present invention. This device can be roughly divided into a signal processor 10 and an optical structure 20.

[0017] The optical structure 20 is identical to that used in conventional examples, and is comprised of a liquid crystal panel 21, a light source 22, an optical system 23, a screen 24, and the like. The optical system 23 is comprised of dichroic mirrors 23a and 23b, and projection lenses 23c. A normally white panel is used for the liquid crystal panel 21. Note that the optical structure 20 is not limited to that illustrated in the figure, and any structure may be used as long as it transmits the light emitted from the light source 22 through the liquid crystal panel 21, and magnifies and projects the transmitted light onto the screen 24.

[0018] The signal processor 10 is comprised of an image signal input circuit 11 that receives video [signals] and radio waves from broadcasting stations and inputs an image signal; a brightness-detecting circuit 12 that detects the mean, maximum, and minimum brightness levels, etc. of said image signal over the entire screen; a light source brightness modulating circuit 13 that varies the brightness of the light source based on the detected brightness signal; a light source power supply 14 whose voltage value is controlled by the modulating circuit 13; and an image signal modulating circuit 15 that modulates the source image signal, using the brightness signal detected by the brightness-detecting circuit 12, to generate the drive signal voltage to be applied to the liquid crystal panel.

[0019] Here, the light source brightness modulating circuit 13 is set to reduce the voltage value of the power supply 14, if the mean brightness detected by the brightness-detecting circuit 12 is low, and to increase the voltage value of the power supply 13 [sic. Should be "14"], if the detected mean brightness is high. The image signal modulating circuit 15 is set to reduce the drive signal voltage if the mean brightness is low, and to increase the drive signal voltage if the mean brightness is high. It is also possible to implement finely tuned control, according to the maximum or minimum brightness.

[0020] The solid line in FIGURE 2 shows the measured relationship between the image signal voltage and the brightness on the screen displayed, using the device in the present embodiment. Raster scan was used for the display, and the brightness on the screen was measured. The dotted line, in the same figure, shows the brightness characteristics based on conventional drive signals. A comparison of these results indicates that the device, according to the present embodiment, provides superior contrast ratio and image signal reproducibility.

[0021] The principle behind the present invention will be explained here, referencing FIGURE 3. When the brightness of the light source is changed, in a liquid crystal panel having the drive signal voltage-transmittance characteristic curve shown in FIGURE 3 (a), the drive signal voltage-transmittance characteristic curve rises when the light source is bright, and falls when the light source is dark, as shown in FIGURE 3 (b). In other words, the brightness of the light source relative to the drive voltage can be varied, within the scope of the shaded area in FIGURE 3 (b).

[0022] FIGURE 4 plots the curves in FIGURE 3 (b) by showing the relative brightness of the light source along the horizontal axis and the brightness along the screen on the vertical axis. The topmost line indicates a case in which the drive signal voltage is small, namely the white level of this display device. The bottommost line indicates a case in which the drive signal voltage is large, namely the black level of this display device. Here, for the sake of simplicity, the brightness of the light source was varied in only three levels: (1) the standard level (100%), (2) brighter than the standard level (120%), and (3) darker than the standard level (50%).

[0023] Let us assume that a signal voltage, within the range of V3 to V5, is applied as the image signal to a screen. If the image signal, within the range of V3 to V5, is applied as is, to the liquid crystal panel as its drive signal, the resulting range of brightness on the screen can be denoted by A when the brightness of the light source is at (1) (the standard level). Now, a brightness range A', which is the same as A, can also be obtained by reducing the brightness of the light source to (3) (darker than the standard level), and varying the drive signal voltage within the range of V2 to V5. The liquid crystal drive voltage range is wider for A' than for A. Therefore, case A', that is, using a lower brightness level for the light source, can produce finer gray scales.

[0024] Likewise, when an image signal within the range of V1 to V3 is input and applied as is to the liquid crystal panel, the resulting range of brightness can be denoted by B. If the brightness of the light source is increased to (2) and a drive signal within the range V1 to V4 is applied to the liquid crystal panel, the white level increases and the contrast ratio becomes higher.

[0025] In the present embodiment, an a-Si TFT liquid crystal panel is used as the liquid crystal panel. As was explained for the conventional example, when TFT is irradiated with light, the drain current (optical leakage current: I_{off}) in the off state ($V_g < 0$) increases, causing the holding characteristics of the pixels to deteriorate, leading to lower contrast ratios and flicker. FIGURE 5 shows the differences in the optical leakage current, when the light intensity is varied. This figure shows the transistor characteristics for three cases: when no light is being irradiated (indicated by the solid line in the figure), when the illumination intensity is at L1 (indicated by the dot-chain line in the figure), and when the illumination intensity is at L2 (indicated by the broken line in the figure). Note that $L2 > L1$. The figure shows that the optical leakage current is smaller, at the lower illumination intensity of L1, than at the higher illumination intensity of L2.

[0026] To make the displayed image brighter on a projection-type liquid crystal display device, it is necessary to make the light source brighter. The intensity of the light, irradiated onto the liquid crystal panel, reaches as high as 20,000 lux in conventional examples. Thus, the optical leakage current of a TFT is too large to ignore, and can have various types of adverse effects.

[0027] In the present embodiment, the brightness of the light source is increased when the image is bright, and is decreased when the image is dark. Therefore, the leakage current is not constant, but is greater when the image is bright, and smaller when the image is dark. In contrast, the optical leakage current hardly causes any problems when the image is bright, but clearly manifests itself as image quality degradation when the image is dark. Therefore, by varying the brightness of the light source, as in the present embodiment, it is possible to reduce the optical leakage current that is present when the image is dark, which can cause image quality degradation.

[0028] As explained above, according to the present embodiment, by varying the brightness of the light source, corresponding to the mean brightness over the entire screen, as well as by modulating the drive signal (image signal) to be applied to the liquid crystal panel, a projection-type liquid crystal display device, with low power consumption, is achieved that provides a high contrast ratio, and displays gray scales with ease.

[0029] In the aforementioned embodiment, the light source and drive signal are modulated based on the brightness of the image signal. However, it is also possible to use modulation based on a color signal, or to add a signal exclusively used for modulation to the image signal. Furthermore, the brightness of the light source is not limited to three levels, and can be set to many more levels. It is also possible to continuously vary the brightness of the light source. Moreover, in the present embodiment, a normally white panel is used for the liquid crystal panel. However, the same effects can

be obtained using a normally black panel. In this case, the voltage to be applied to the liquid crystal panel will be reversed for black and white, from the aforementioned embodiment.

[0030] FIGURE 6 is a schematic configuration diagram that illustrates a second embodiment of the present invention. Note that, in this figure, parts having the same functions as in FIGURE 1 are assigned the same symbols, and their detailed explanation is omitted. This second embodiment is different from the first one explained above, in that two lamps are used as the light source 22.

[0031] The light sources 22a and 22b, in this embodiment, are metal halide lamps. Since a metal halide lamp is a discharge-type lamp, its light emission efficiency and brightness are high. In this embodiment, metal halide lamp 22b is kept at a constant brightness level, and used for increasing the brightness of the display device itself, while brightness modulation is performed using the other metal halide lamp 22a.

[0032] To align their optical axes, the light beams emitted from the two lamps 22a and 22b are combined by means of a prism 23. This configuration also produces the same effects as the aforementioned embodiment. In the present embodiment, two lamps of the same type are used in combination. However, the lamp types need not be identical, and the number of lamps may also be two or more. Furthermore, it is also possible to use lamps whose brightness is varied, and lamps with brightness in combinations other than that used in the present embodiment.

[0033] In the above two embodiments, the liquid crystal panel uses a polarizer. However, in a projection-type panel, the light from the light source is intense, and most of this light is absorbed by the polarizer and turned into heat. Therefore, in order to protect the liquid crystal panel from the heat and to improve the heat dissipation efficiency, a polarizer 71 is glued onto a glass substrate 73 using adhesive 72, in a position away from the liquid crystal panel 74, as shown in FIGURE 7. When two configurations were compared (one in which the glass was positioned on the liquid crystal panel side, as shown in FIGURE 7 (a), and another in which the polarizer faced the liquid crystal panel as shown in FIGURE 7 (b)), the configuration shown in FIGURE 7 (b) produced a higher contrast ratio, as well as better color display characteristics.

[0034] A possible reason for this difference is the effect of the adhesive 72. That is, in the case shown in FIGURE 7 (a), light that has been polarized by the polarizer 71 is disturbed by the adhesive 72 before entering the liquid crystal panel 74. In contrast, in the case shown in FIGURE 7 (b), light that has been disturbed by the adhesive 72 is polarized by the polarizer 71 and, as a result, uniformly polarized light enters the liquid crystal panel 74. For the reason stated above, it is also possible to adopt a method that secures the polarizer without using the adhesive 72.

[0035]

[Effects of the Invention] As described in detail above, because the present invention uses a configuration in which the brightness of the light source can be varied in correspondence to the image signal, it can achieve a projection-type liquid crystal display device that projects a high-contrast-ratio image on a screen, reduce power consumption, and display gray scales with ease.

[Brief Explanation of Drawings]

[FIGURE 1] A schematic configuration diagram illustrating the projection-type liquid crystal display device, related to a first embodiment of the present invention.

[FIGURE 2] A diagram illustrating the image signal voltage-brightness characteristics, in the first embodiment.

[FIGURE 3] A diagram illustrating the drive signal voltage-brightness characteristics, in the first embodiment.

[FIGURE 4] A diagram illustrating the changes in brightness on the screen, relative to the changes in brightness of the light source.

[FIGURE 5] A diagram illustrating the I_d - V_g characteristics of an a-Si thin film transistor.

[FIGURE 6] A schematic configuration diagram illustrating a second embodiment of the present invention.

[FIGURE 7] A diagram illustrating a polarizer-positioning example.

[FIGURE 8] A schematic configuration diagram illustrating a conventional projection-type liquid crystal display device.

[FIGURE 9] A diagram illustrating the signal voltage-brightness characteristics in a conventional device.

[Explanation of Symbols]

- 10 ... Signal processor
- 11 ... Image signal input circuit
- 12 ... Brightness-detecting circuit
- 13 ... Light source brightness modulating circuit
- 14, 14a, 14b ... Power supplies
- 15 ... Image signal modulating circuit
- 20 ... Optical structure
- 21 ... Liquid crystal panel
- 22 ... Light source
- 23 ... Optical system
- 23a, 23b ... Dichroic mirrors
- 23c ... Projection lens
- 23d ... Prism
- 24 ... Screen

[FIGURE 1]

- 11: Image signal input circuit
- 15: Image signal modulating circuit
- 12: Brightness-detecting circuit
- 13: Light source brightness modulating circuit
- 14: Power supply
- 10: Signal processor
- 20: Optical structure

[FIGURE 2]

Brightness
Signal voltage

—— Characteristics in the present embodiment
----- Characteristics in a conventional example

[FIGURE 9]

Brightness
Signal voltage

[FIGURE 3]

(a)
Transmittance [%]
Signal voltage

(b)
Brightness on the screen Bright light source

Signal voltage

Dark light source

[FIGURE 4]

Brightness [cd/m^2]

White level

(Low drive signal voltage)

Black level

(High drive signal voltage)

Relative brightness of the light source [%]

[FIGURE 5]

At illumination intensity of L2

Optical leakage current

At illumination intensity of L1

No light being irradiated

[FIGURE 7]

71: Polarizer

74: Liquid crystal panel

72: Adhesive

73: Glass

[FIGURE 6]

11: Image signal input circuit

15: Image signal modulating circuit

12: Brightness-detecting circuit

13: Light source brightness modulating circuit

14a: Power supply

14b: Power supply

10: Signal processor

20: Optical [structure]

[FIGURE 8]

Image signal circuit

Power supply

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 1

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 2top left

Figure 3a and 3b Bottom

Figure 9 Top right

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 4

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 5 top
Figure 7 Bottom

s

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 6

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 8

PROJECTION TYPE LIQUID CRYSTAL DISPLAY DEVICE

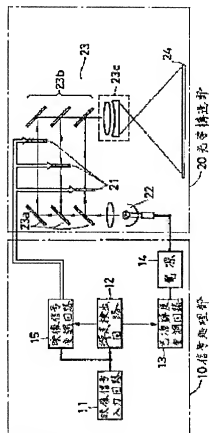
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Inventor: OTAGURO HIROSHI
Applicant: TOSHIBA CORP
Classification:
 - international: G03B33/12; G02F1/133; G02F1/1335; G03B21/14; H04N5/74
 - european:
Application number: JP19910227907 19910909
Priority number(s):

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Abstract of JP5066501

PURPOSE: To provide the projection type liquid crystal display device which projects a high-contrast-ratio image on a screen and easily makes a gradational display and is reducible in power consumption.

CONSTITUTION: The projection type liquid crystal display device equipped with a transmission type liquid crystal panel 21, a light source 22 which irradiates this liquid crystal panel 21 with light, and an optical system 23 which transmits the light emitted by the light source 22 through the liquid crystal panel 21 and projects the light on the screen 24 is provided with a brightness detecting circuit 12 which detects mean brightness per picture of a video signal, a video signal modulating circuit 15 which modulates a video signal voltage applied to the liquid crystal panel 21 corresponding to a brightness signal detected by the circuit 12, and a light source brightness modulating circuit 13 which varies the brightness of the light source 22 corresponding to the detected brightness signal.



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【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】透過型の液晶パネルと、この液晶パネルに光を照射する光源と、この光源から出た光を前記液晶パネルに透過させてスクリーン上に投影する光学系と、前記液晶パネルに映像信号に応じた駆動電圧を供給する手段と、前記映像信号に応じて光源の輝度を変化させる手段とを具備してなることを特徴とする投射型液晶表示装置。

【発明の詳細な説明】

【0001】

【産業上の利用分野】本発明は、投射型液晶表示装置に係わり、特に光源の輝度を可変する手段を備えた投射型液晶表示装置に関する。

【0002】

【従来の技術】近年、パーソナルコンピュータのディスプレイや小型テレビに用いられる表示装置として、薄型軽量の液晶表示装置が注目されている。しかし、現在商品化されている液晶テレビは対角4インチ程度の大さでしかなく、現在のCRTによるテレビにとって代わるにはサイズ・価格共程遠いのが現状である。

【0003】そこで最近、液晶パネルをライトバルブとして使用し、レンズやダイクロイックミラーと組み合わせることにより、映像をスクリーン上に拡大する投射型液晶表示装置が開発されている。この装置は、CRTを用いた3管式プロジェクターに比しても小型軽量であり、画面の大型化を十分に満足することができる。

【0004】図8に、投射型液晶表示装置の代表的な構造例を示す。この装置は、3枚の液晶パネル81、ハロゲンランプなどの光源82、レンズやミラーなどの光学系83から構成されている。そして、光源82から出た光をダイクロイックミラー83aで赤、青、緑の三原色に分け液晶パネル81を透過させた後、再びダイクロイックミラー83bにより合成し、投射用レンズ83cでスクリーン84上に投射する。各液晶パネル81にはそれぞれ色色に対応した信号電圧が印加されている。このため、赤、青、緑の3色に対応する像がスクリーン84上に拡大投射され、これによりカラー画像が表示されることになる。

【0005】しかしながら、この種の装置にあつては次のような問題があった。即ち、画面サイズを大きくしようとするればスクリーン上での輝度が落ち、コントラスト比が落ちてしまう。これを解決するために光源の輝度を上げると、消費電力が多くなり発熱量も増える。

【0006】また、液晶パネル自体の電圧-輝度特性は図9のようになっており、コントラスト比が50対1程度と低く、映像信号の本来持っているコントラスト比は表示できない。従つて、明るい部分の表示や暗い部分の表示を行った場合、画像が潰れてしまい、精細な画像を得られない。さらに、電圧-透過率特性が急峻すぎ、またその電圧差も少ないので細かな階調表示を行うことは

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難しい。

【0007】また、液晶パネルにアモルファスシリコン(a-si)の薄膜トランジスタ(TFT)液晶パネルを用いた場合、画面を明るくするために光源の光を強くすると、TFTのオフ電流(光リーク電流)が増加し、コントラスト比の低下などの画像劣化が起こる。

【0008】

【発明が解決しようとする課題】このように、従来の投射型液晶表示装置においては、液晶パネルの特性からコントラスト比が不足しており、しかも液晶パネルの電圧-透過率特性が急峻すぎて細かな階調表示は難しい。また、光源による消費電力が大きくなり、さらに光源の光を強くすると、光リーク電流の増加によるコントラスト比の低下などの画像劣化が起こる問題があった。

【0009】本発明は、上記事情を考慮してなされたもので、その目的とするところは、スクリーン上に投影される画像のコントラスト比が高く、階調表示が容易であり、かつ消費電力の低減をはかり得る投射型液晶表示装置を提供することにある。

【0010】

【課題を解決するための手段】上記目的を達成するために本発明では、次のような構成を採用している。

【0011】即ち本発明は、透過型の液晶パネルと、この液晶パネルに光を照射するための光源と、この光源から出た光を液晶パネルに透過させてスクリーン上に投影する光学系と、液晶パネルに映像信号に応じた駆動電圧を供給する手段とを備えた投射型液晶表示装置において、映像信号に応じて光源の輝度を変化させるようにしたものである。

【0012】ここで、光源の輝度を変化させる手段としては、映像信号の1画面当りの平均輝度、最大輝度及び最小輝度を検出し、この検出情報に応じて光源の輝度を変えるようにすればよい。また、光源のみならず、映像信号に応じて液晶パネルに印加する駆動電圧を変動するようにしてもよい。

【0013】

【作用】本発明では、映像信号に対応して光源の輝度を変化させる。つまり、画面全体が暗い映像信号の時は光源の輝度を下げ、画面全体が明るい場合は光源の輝度を上げる。すると、明るい画面と暗い画面とを比較した場合のコントラスト比は向上する。しかも、光源の輝度を下げた場合は、消費電力の低減は勿論のこと、液晶パネルの運動電子の光リークを低減することができ、コントラスト比も良くなる。

【0014】また、映像信号に対応して液晶パネルに印加する信号電圧を変化させる。つまり、液晶パネルの信号電圧-透過率特性の白レベルと黒レベルの範囲内までできるだけいっぱい使うように映像信号を変調し、液晶パネルに印加する信号電圧とする。すると、階調表示を行う場合、信号電圧を細かい階調に分けることのできるの

で、階調表示が容易にでき、しかも細かく階調を整えることが可能となる。

【0015】

【実施例】以下、本発明の詳細を図示の実施例によって説明する。

【0016】図1は、本発明の第1の実施例に係わる投射型液晶表示装置を示す概略構成図である。この装置は大きく分けて、信号処理部10と光学構造部20とに分けられる。

【0017】光学構造部20は従来例と同じであり、液晶パネル21、光源22、光学系23及びスクリーン24等から構成されている。光学系23は、ダイクロイックミラー23a、23b及び投射用レンズ23cからなり、液晶パネル21としてはノーマリーホワイトのものを用いた。なお、光学構造部20は図1に限定されるものではなく、光源22から出た光を液晶パネル21を通過させてスクリーン24上に拡大投射するものであればよい。

【0018】信号処理部10は、ビデオ放送局からの電波などを受信して映像信号を入力する映像信号入力回路11と、該映像信号の1画面当りの平均輝度、最大輝度及び最小輝度などを検出する輝度検出回路12と、検出された輝度信号により光源の輝度を変えるための光源輝度変調回路13と、変調回路13により電圧値が制御される光源用の電源14と、輝度検出回路12により検出された輝度信号で元の映像信号を変換し液晶パネルに印加する駆動信号電圧を作る映像信号変調回路15とからなっている。

【0019】ここで、光源輝度変調回路13は、輝度検出回路12で検出された平均輝度が暗い場合は電源14の電圧値を下げ、平均輝度が明るい場合は電源13の電圧値を上げるように設定されている。また、映像信号変調回路15は、平均輝度が暗い場合は駆動信号電圧の低い方をより低く、平均輝度が明るい場合は駆動信号電圧の高い方をより高くするように設定されている。また、最大輝度及び最小輝度に応じてより細かい制御を行うことも可能である。

【0020】本実施例の装置を用いて表示した画面の映像信号電圧とスクリーン上での輝度特性をはかった結果を、図2に実線で示す。表示はラスカ表示とし、スクリーン上での輝度特性を測定した。また、同図上に従来の駆動信号での輝度特性を点線で示す。これらの比較から、本実施例装置におけるコントラスト比及び映像信号の再現性が優れていることが分かる。

【0021】ここで、本発明の原理を図3により説明する。図3(a)に示すような駆動信号電圧-透過率特性を持つ液晶パネルがあったとき、光源の輝度を変えると、図3(b)に示すように駆動信号電圧-輝度特性は、光源が明るい場合は上へ上がり、逆に光源が暗い場合は下へ下がる。つまり、図3(b)の斜線の範囲で駆

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動信号に対する光源の明るさを変化させることができる。

【0022】図4は横軸に光源の相対輝度を取り、縦軸にスクリーン上での輝度を取って、図3(b)をプロットした図である。一番上の直線は駆動信号電圧が小さいときで、この表示装置の白レベルである。一番下の直線は駆動信号電圧が大きいときで、この表示装置の黒レベルである。ここでは簡単のために光源の輝度は、(1)標準(100%)、(2)標準より明るい(120%)、(3)標準より暗い(50%)の3段階のみ変化するとする。

【0023】映像信号として、ある1画面でV3〜V5の範囲の信号電圧が印加されたとする。映像信号をそのまま液晶パネルの駆動信号としてV3〜V5の範囲で液晶パネルに印加すると、光源の輝度が(1)の標準のとき、スクリーン上の輝度はAのようになる。このとき、光源の輝度を(3)標準より暗くし、駆動信号電圧をV2〜V5の範囲で変化させても、Aと同じ輝度範囲のA'が得られる。Aの場合よりA'の方が液晶の駆動電圧としては幅が広い。従って、A'の方が、即ち光源の輝度を暗くした方がより細かく階調を取ることができる。

【0024】同様に、V1〜V3の範囲で映像信号が入力されたとき、そのまま液晶パネルに印加すれば、輝度の範囲はBのようになる。このとき、光源の輝度を上げて、(2)の条件にし、V1〜V4の範囲の駆動信号を液晶パネルに印加すれば、白レベルが上がり、コントラスト比が高くなる。

【0025】本実施例では液晶パネルとして、a-SiのTFT液晶パネルを使用した。従来例でも説明したようにTFTに光を照射すると、オキド化(Vg<0)でのドレイン電流(光リーク電流:I_{off})が増加して、画素の保持特性の劣化が生じ、コントラスト比の低下やフリッカ発生の原因となる。光の強さを変化させたときの光リーク電流の違いを、図5に示す。この図は、光が照射されていない場合(図中実線で示す)、照度L1の場合(図中一点鎖線で示す)、照度L2の場合(図中破線で示す)との、それぞれのトランジスタ特性を示している。但し、(L2>L1)である。照度が高いL2よりも照度が低いL1の方が、光リーク電流が小さくことが分かる。

【0026】投射型液晶表示装置の場合、映像を明るくするためには光源を明るくすることが必要であり、液晶パネルに照射される光の強さは、従来例で20万ルクスにも達する。従って、TFTの光リーク電流も無視できない大きさであり、この光リーク電流により種々の悪影響が生じる。

【0027】本実施例では、映像が明るい場合は光源の輝度を上げ、映像が暗い場合は光源の輝度を下げている。従って、リーク電流は一定ではなく、映像が明るい場合は大きく、暗い場合は小さいものとなる。一方、光リーク電流は映像が明るい場合は殆ど問題とならない

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が、暗い場合には画質劣化として顕著に現われる。従って本実施例のように光源の輝度を可変すれば、画質劣化の要因となる暗い映像における光リーク電流を少なくすることができる。

【0028】このように本実施例によれば、1画面当たりの平均輝度に応じて光源の輝度を可変すると共に、液晶パネルに印加する駆動信号（映像信号）を変調することにより、コントラスト比が高く、階調表示が容易になり、低消費電力の投射型液晶表示装置を実現することができる。

【0029】上記実施例では光源及び駆動信号の変調を映像信号の輝度により行ったが、色信号による変調や、変調専用の信号を映像信号に付加することによっても可能である。また、光源の輝度は3段階に限らず、複数の段階にすることができ、連続的に変化させることも可能である。また、実施例では液晶パネルとしてノーマリホワイト型のものを用いたが、ノーマリブラック型のものを用いても同様の効果が得られる。この場合、液晶パネルに印加する電圧を、白黒で実施例とは逆にすればよい。

【0030】図6は、本発明の第2の実施例を示す概略構成図である。なお、図1と同一部分には同一符号を付して、その詳しい説明は省略する。本実施例が、先に説明した実施例と異なる点は、光源22として2つのランプを用いたことにある。

【0031】本実施例における光源22a、22bはメタルハライド・ランプである。メタルハライド・ランプは放電型ランプであるので、発光効率は高く、輝度が高いという特徴がある。本実施例ではメタルハライド・ランプ22bの方は輝度を一定とし表示装置としての輝度を高くするのに用い、輝度の変調をもう一方のメタルハライド・ランプ22aを用いて行う。

【0032】2つのランプ22a、22bから発光した光は光栓を合わせるためプリズム23dで合成する。このようにしても先の実施例と同様の効果が得られる。本実施例では、2つの同じ種類のランプを組み合わせた方が、ランプの種類は異なってもよく、数も2つ以上でもよい。また、輝度を変化させるランプと変化させないランプの組み合わせも、本実施例には限定されない。

【0033】以上の2つの実施例において、液晶パネルには偏光板を使用しているが、投射型の場合光源からの光が強く、その多くは偏光板で吸収されて熱に代わる。従って、液晶パネルを熱から守るためと、放熱効率を良くするために、図7のように偏光板71をガラス基板73に接着剤72で張り付け、液晶パネル74から離れた位置に設置する。この場合に、図7(a)のように液晶パネル側にガラスが来るように配置する場合と、図7(b)に示すように偏光板が液晶パネル側に向くように

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配置した場合を比較した結果、図7(b)のように配置した方がコントラスト比や色表示特性が良くなった。

【0034】この理由として、接着剤72の影響が考えられる。即ち、図7(a)の場合、偏光板71を介して偏光された光が接着剤72で乱されて液晶パネル74に入射することになる。これに対し、図7(b)の場合、接着剤72で乱された光は偏光板71により偏光され、偏光方向の揃った光が液晶パネル74に入射されることとなるためである。また、上記の理由から、接着剤72を使わないで偏光板を固定する方法を採用してもよい。

【0035】

【発明の効果】以上詳述したように本発明によれば、映像信号に応じて光源の輝度を可変する構成としているので、スクリーン上に投射される映像のコントラスト比が高く、階調表示が容易で、消費電力が少ない投射型液晶表示装置を実現することが可能となる。

【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】本発明の第1の実施例に係る投射型液晶表示装置を示す概略構成図、

20 【図2】第1の実施例における映像信号電圧—輝度特性を示す図、

【図3】第1の実施例における駆動信号電圧—輝度特性を示す図、

【図4】光源の輝度変化に対するスクリーン上での輝度変化を示す図、

【図5】a—S I 薄膜トランジスタのI_d—V_g特性を示す図、

【図6】本発明の第2の実施例を示す概略構成図、

【図7】偏光板の配置例を示す図、

30 【図8】従来の投射型液晶表示装置を示す概略構成図、

【図9】従来装置における信号電圧—輝度特性を示す図、

【符号の説明】

10…信号処理部、

11…映像信号入力部、

12…輝度検出回路、

13…光源輝度変調回路、

14、14a、14b…電源、

15…映像信号変調回路、

40 20…光学構造部、

21…液晶パネル、

22…光源、

23…光学系、

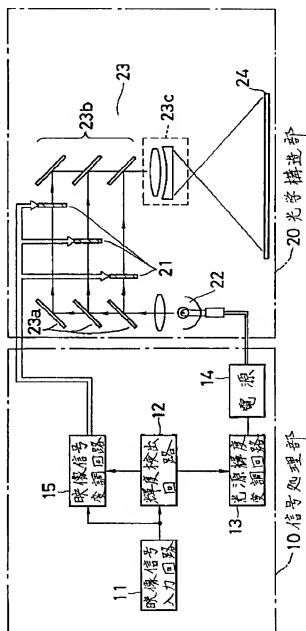
23a、23b…ダイクロイックミラー、

23c…投射用レンズ、

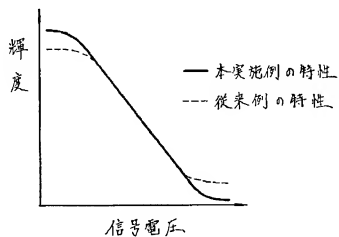
23d…プリズム、

24…スクリーン。

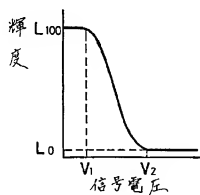
【図1】



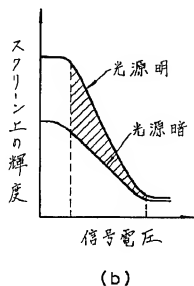
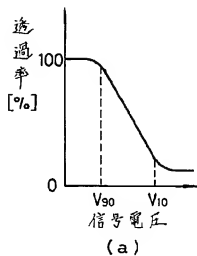
【図2】



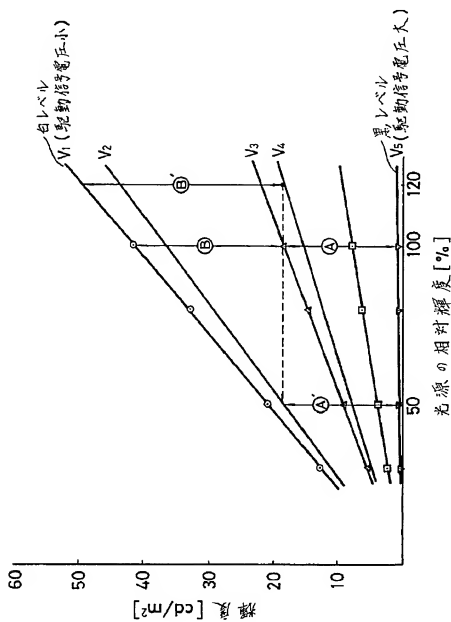
【図9】



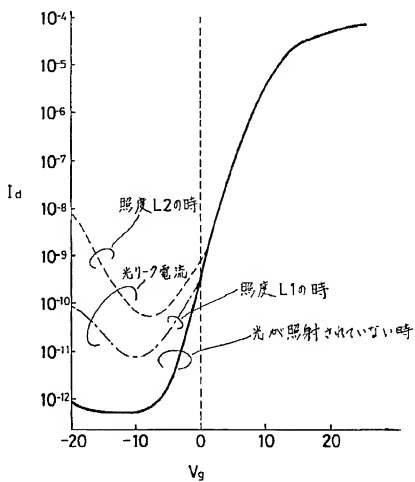
【図3】



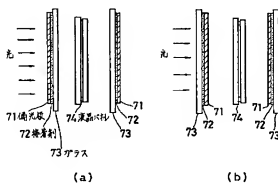
【図4】



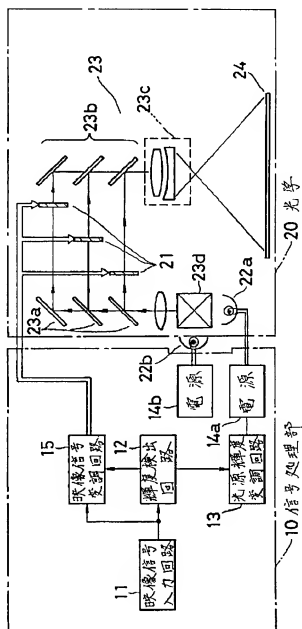
【図5】



【図7】



【図6】



【図8】

